

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 COTONOU 1063

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: SHUM, DM
SUBJ: PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN: DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS COUNTRY
ACTION PLAN

REF: (A) STATE 142620, (B) COTONOU 1021

1. THIS CABLE INCORPORATES THE EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT REPORTED BY
REF B INTO DRAFT PLAN PROPOSED IN REF A.

2. DRAFT PLAN:

A. CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN BENIN:

1. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING
FREEDOM FROM:

A.) TORTURE: THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC
OF BENIN (GPRB) DOES NOT OFFICIALLY CONDONE NOR IS THERE EVIDENCE
THAT IT SYSTEMTICALLY ENGAGES IN TORTURE OF PERSONS. WHILE WE
MUST ASSUME THAT BEATINGS BY PRISON GUARDS AND SOLDIERS TAKE
PLACE, WE HAVE NO PROOF OF EXTENSIVE ABUSES. WE KNOW OF NO
INSTANCES IN WHICH GROSS PHYSICAL TORTURE SUCH AS EXTRACTION
OF FINGERNAILS OR APPLICATION OF ELECTRICITY TO GENITALS, ETC.,
HAS BEEN EMPLOYED. EMBASSY HAS HAD NO
RELIABLE REPORTS OF WIDESPREAD VIOLENT MISTREATMENT OF THOSE ARRESTED
FOLLOWING THE JANUARY 16, 1977 ATTEMPTED COUP/MERCENARY ATTACK.
MAJOR COMPLAINT WAS OVERCROWDING AND NEGLECT OF AUTHORITIES
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TO PROVIDE FOOD OR NOTIFY FAMILIES AND CONSULAR REPRESENTATIVES
OF DETENTION. IN ONVE CASE, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE MERCENARY
ATTACK A SOLDIER FORCED A GROUP OF WESTERN PRISONERS TO STRIP
AND LINE UP AGAINST A WALL. ONE INDIVIDUAL WHO REFUSED WAS
BEATEN. WHEN AN OFFICER CAME ON THE SCENE, HOWEVER, SOLDIER
WAS REPRIMANDED AND PRISONERS GIVEN BACK THEIR CLOTHES.

B.) CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT: ALTHOUGH RUMORS CIRCULATED IN 1976 OF PERSONS BEING SUBJECTED TO EXTREMELY DEGRADING TREATMENT (E.G., BEING FORCED TO EAT THEIR OWN EXCREMENT, LICK OFFICERS' BOOTS AND HAVING THEIR HEADS SHAVED WITH BROKEN GLASS), THEIR AUTHENTICITY HAS NEVER BEEN SUBSTANTIATED. ONLY INSTANCES WE ARE AWARE OF WERE THOSE NOTED IN PARAGRAPH 1A AND TWO SEPARATE INSTANCES IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE MERCENARY ATTACK WHEN SOLDIERS REPORTEDLY FORCED CATHOLIC NUNS TO STRIP. THE NUNS, HOWEVER, APPARENTLY WERE NOT OTHERWISE ABUSED. INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE OPENLY CRITICIZED THE REVOLUTION HAVE BEEN TAKEN FOR "REVOLUTIONARY EDUCATION" AT MILITARY CAMP. THIS INVOLVES STANDING FOR LONG HOURS RECITING SLOGANS AND ABSORBING PRECEPTS OF "SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM." INDOCTRINEES USUALLY HAVE BEEN RELEASED WITHIN TWO OR THREE DAYS. GPRB IS MOST VULNERABLE ON LENGTH OF TIME ITS DETAINEES MUST SPEND IN PRISON BEFORE POSITIVE ACTION TAKEN. INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED TEND TO BE FORGOTTEN BY AUTHORITIES WHO SELDOM NOTIFY FAMILIES OF ARREST NOR IN CONSULAR CASES INFORM THE APPROPRIATE EMBASSIES OF INDIVIDUALS' DETENTION. MAJOR CAUSE OF DELAY IS LUMBERING BUREAUCRACY AND FACT THAT UNDER STATE OF EMERGENCY THAT HAS EXISTED SINCE JANUARY 16, 1977, ALL RELEASES MUST BE PERSONALLY SIGNED BY MINISTER OF INTERIOR WHOSE POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DUTIES MAKE ACCESS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE.

C.) ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT: DURING THE 4-1/2 YEARS THAT REVOLUTIONARY MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS HELD CONFIDENTIAL

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POWER THERE HAVE BEEN FOUR ACTUAL OR ALLEGED COUP ATTEMPTS, EACH OF WHICH HAS BEEN FOLLOWED BY A WAVE OF ARBITRARY ARRESTS, IMPRISONMENT OF SUSPECTED ACCOMPLICES OR PLOTTERS, EXAGGERATED THREATS AGAINST WOULD-BE ENEMIES OF THE STATE, AND AN ATMOSPHERE OF UNCERTAINTY. BETWEEN EPISODES, THERE HAVE BEEN PERIODS OF RELATIVE CALM WHEN LIFE PROCEEDS FAIRLY NORMALLY WITHOUT ANY OVERT INTIMIDATION BY GPRB AUTHORITIES. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING JANUARY 1

MERCENARY ATTACK ENORMOUS NUMBERS OF BENINESE AND FOREIGNERS WERE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY AND QUESTIONED BUT NEARLY ALL WERE RELEASED AFTER VARYING PERIODS OF DETENTION. ONE INFORMED SOURCE ESTIMATES THE NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS CURRENTLY BEING HELD IN COTONOU AS BETWEEN 50-55, MAINLY AS RESULT OF JANUARY 16 COUP ATTEMPT. WE DO NOT HAVE ANY FIGURES FOR THOSE BEING HELD OUTSIDE OF COTONOU, ALTHOUGH ALLEGED COUP COLLABORATORS FROM THE MILITARY ARE REPORTEDLY BEING HELD AT DAN, NORTH OF BOHICON. UNDER THE PRESENT SYSTEM, ONE MAN CAN DENOUNCE ANOTHER AS BEING ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY EITHER FOR GENUINE REASONS OR ON PERSONAL GROUNDS. SUCH DENUNCIATIONS LEAD TO ARREST, DETENTION, "REVOLUTIONARY EDUCATION" WHERE NECESSARY, AND RELEASE.

BEST-KNOWN POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE THREE FORMER PRESIDENTS

(MAGA, APITHY AND AHOMADEGBE) AND CAPTAIN JANVIER ASSOGBA, LEADER OF ALLEGED COUP D'ETAT ATTEMPT IN 1975. UNTIL JANUARY 16 ATTACK, PRESIDENTS REPORTEDLY WERE LIVING IN COMFORT WHILE ASSOGBA WAS SEEN RUNNING PRISON SNACK BAR. AFTER ATTACK PRESIDENTS WERE MOVED, RATHER ROUGHLY, IT IS SAID, TO THE MILITARY CAMP AT DAN WHERE THEY ARE STILL SAID TO BE. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION CONCERNING ASSOGBA. GENERAL SOGLO, THE FOURTH PRESIDENT STILL LIVING IN BENIN, IS THE EMBASSY'S LANDLORD AND LEADS A VERY PROSPEROUS APOLITICAL LIFE IN COTONOU.

WE KNOW OF ONE FRENCH BUSINESSMAN WHO HAS BEEN IN PRISON FOR OVER FOUR MONTHS ON UNSPECIFIED CHARGES CONNECTED WITH THE MERCENARY ATTACK AND ANOTHER FRENCH RESIDENT OF 20 YEARS STANDING WHO WAS RUDELY EXPELLED UPON BEING ACCUSED OF HELPING

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DISSIDENTS. OTHER FRENCH NATIONALS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AND RELEASED AT VARIOUS TIMES. THE DIRECTOR OF THE BENINESE GOVERNMENT ELECTRICITY COMPANY WAS SUMMARILY ARRESTED ONE NIGHT RECENTLY WHEN POWER FAILED BUT WAS RELEASED THE NEXT DAY. HIS ARREST WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN IN RETALIATION FOR HAVING CAUSED PRESIDENT KEREKOU, WHO WAS ATTENDING A BOXING MATCH AT TIME, TO DIVE UNDER HIS CHAIR IN FEAR THAT BLACKOUT MEANT SECOND MERCENARY ATTACK.

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D.) DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL: CONSTITUTION WAS SUSPENDED AND RULE BY DECREE INSTITUTED SHORTLY AFTER KEREKOU SEIZED POWER IN 1972. LEGAL SYSTEM WHICH WAS CRIPPLED BY ABROGATION OF CONSTITUTION, DEALT FINAL BLOW BY STATE OF EMERGENCY INSTITUTED

AFTER JANUARY 16 ATTEMPTED COUP D'ETAT. THUS, NO GUARANTEES OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL HAVE EXISTED AND GOVERNMENT HAS IN PAST STAGED MOCK TRIALS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS. DRAFT CONSTITUTION CURRENTLY BEING DISCUSSED IN TOWN MEETINGS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY PROVISION FOR A PUBLIC TRIAL BY "PROFESSIONAL AND NON-PROFESSIONAL" JUDGES. IT IS TOO SOON TO TELL HOW OR WHETHER THIS SYSTEM WILL WORK.

D.) INVASION OF THE HOME: JANUARY 16 MERCENARY ATTACK LED TO WIDESCALE UNAUTHORIZED SEARCHES OF HOMES OF BENINESE AND FOREIGN NATIONALS. SINCE FEARS OF RENEWED MERCENARY ATTACK HAVE ABATED, THERE HAVE BEEN NO RECENT INSTANCES OF ILLEGAL SEARCHES. SYSTEM OF DENUNCIATION NOTED IN PARAGRAPH C ABOVE, HOWEVER, LEAVES OPEN POSSIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS TO BE SEIZED FROM THEIR HOMES BY POLICE AUTHORITIES AT ANY TIME.

2. (RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES:

(A) FREED OF THOUGHT, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY:

GPRB'S ABROGATION OF THE CONSTITUTION AND ITS EFFORTS TO TRANSFORM BENIN INTO A MARXIST-LENINIST STATE BASED ON PRINCIPLES OF "SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM" HAVE LED TO SUPPRESSION
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OF INDEPENDENT POLITICAL OR LABOR ACTIVITY, DEMONSTRATIONS, FREE EXPRESSION OR ANY OTHER ACTION IMPLYING CRITICISM OF THE REGIME. THE PRESS IS GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AND DISTRIBUTION OF WESTERN PUBLICATIONS IS LIMITED. ALTHOUGH ALL RELIGIONS ARE ALLOWED TO PRACTICE, KEREKOU GOVERNMENT, FEARING POWER OF LOCAL CULT PRACTICES, HAS HEAVILY CURTAILED HOLDING OF TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES. CHRISTIANS HAVE BEEN OCCASIONALLY HARRASSED, BUT CHURCHES CONTINUE TO FUNCTION NORMALLY. ONLY SECT AGAINST WHICH DRASTIC ACTION TAKEN HAS BEEN JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WHO REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE LEGITIMACY OF GOVERNMENT OR REVOLUTION. ALL MEMBERS OF SECT WERE EXPELLED IN APRIL 1976 AND THEIR PROPERTY CONFISCATED.

DRAFT CONSTITUTION PROVIDES FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH, PRESS, THOUGHT, ASSEMBLY, ASSOCIATION AND DEMONSTRATION (ARTICLE 133). ARTICLE 135 ALSO GUARANTEES INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY TO ALL CITIZENS OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN. AGAIN, IT IS TOO SOON TO KNOW DEGREE TO WHICH DRAFT CONSTITUTION WILL BE IMPLEMENTED.

B.) FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN A COUNTRY, FOREIGN TRAVEL AND EMMIGRATION POLICY: AS PART OF THE STATE OFEMERGENCY GPRB DECREED THAT ALL FOREIGNERS INCLUDING DIPLOMATS COULD NOT LEAVE THEIR DISTRICTS WITHOUT SPECIAL LAISSEZ-PASSER. THIS WAS EXTENSION OF PREVIOUS DECREE WHICH FORBADE CONTACTS BETWEEN BENINESE AND DIPLOMATS WITHOUT PRIOR AUTHORIZATION OF GPRB. NO RESTRICTION

WAS PLACED ON MOVEMENT OF BENINESE IN COUNTRY. DECREE, HOWEVER, WAS NEVER COMMUNICATED IN WRITING TO DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS AND HAS NOT BEEN ENFORCED FOR PAST TWO MONTHS. EVEN BEFORE JANUARY 16 ATTACK, FOREIGNERS SUSPECTED OF BEING ENEMY AGENTS WERE OFTEN ARRESTED ON FLIMSY PRETEXTS, BUT IN ALL CASES WERE ULTIMATELY RELEASED.

ALTHOUGH GPRB OFFICIALLY LIMITS EMIGRATION, IN FACT,
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IT HAS NOT SOUGHT TO PREVENT DISSIDENTS FROM LEAVING COUNTRY. THERE HAS BEEN STEADY EXODUS TO TOGO AND NIGERIA OF STUDENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE DISSATISFIED WITH CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRY. NATURE OF BORDERS MAKES IT EASY FOR ANYONE WHO WISHES TO LEAVE TO DO SO WITHOUT PASSING THROUGH EMMIGRATION FORMALITIES.

C.) DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES ASSURE FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS: SUCH PROCESSES AS EXISTED IN BENIN WERE SUSPENDED WITH THE ABROGATION OF THE CONSTITUTION IN 1972. THE 1977 DRAFT CONSTITUTION, HOWEVER, MAKES PROVISION WITHIN A ONE-PARTY CONTEXT FOR A PARTIALLY ELECTED ASSEMBLY. PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY WILL REMAIN MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE ELEMENT IN NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM.

3. RECENT TRENDS IN GOVERNMENTAL POLICY RELATING TO FULFILLMENT OF BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE, AND EDUCATION:

A). EXTENT TO WHICH POLICIES RESPOND TO OR IGNORE NEEDS OF THE POOR: GNERAL POLICY IS AIMED AT HELPING THE POOR ECONOMICALLY AND IMPROVING EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE, BUT ITS IMPLEMENTATION IS IDEOLOGICALLY RIGID. FOOD PRODUCTION POLICY FOR EXAMPLE, DOES NOT ALLOW FOR ADEGUATE FREE MARKET INCENTIVES BUT RELIES INSTEAD ON EXHORTATION. MERCHANTS ARE BLAMED FOR FAILURES OF THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND UNAVAILABILITY OF GOODS. REGIME HAS TRIED WITHOUT MUCH SUCCESS TO SUPPRESS MERCHANT, MIDDLE CLASS INFLUENCE AS POLITICALLY DANGEROUS. EDUCATION IS ORIENTATED TOWARDS REGIME'S VIEWS AND HAS LED TO DISRUPTIONS SUCH AS CHANGES IN THE SCHOOL YEAR WHICH HAVE COMPLICATED THE EFFORTS OF FOREIGN DONORS TO ASSIST IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR.

GPRB PERMITS OWNERSHIP OF PRIVATE PROPERTY TO THE EXTENT THAT IT DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH "THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC LIFE OR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES." IN PRACTICE THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE CHANGE SINCE KEREKOU REGIME CAME INTO POWER
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WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CONFISCATION OF PROPERTY BELONGING TO PROMINENT ANTI-GOVERNMENT FIGURES WHO HAVE LEFT COUNTRY AND/OR WERE ACCUSED OF PARTICIPATING IN PREVIOUS COUP ATTEMPTS. GOVERNMENT THREATENED TO SEIZE ALL LAND NOT ENCLOSED AND PUT INTO PRODUCTION BY OCTOBER 26, 1976, BUT IT HAS NOT, TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, MADE GOOD ITS THREAT. IN INSTANCES WHERE LAND HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS COMPENSATION HAS BEEN PROMISED.

B) CORRUPTION OF SUCH A NATURE THAT SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES ARE DIVERTED TOWARDS THE NATION'S ELITES AND AWAY FROM THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION: CORRUPTION AMONG POLITICIANS WAS ONE FACTOR WHICH LED KEREKOU TO SEIZE POWER IN 1972. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE RUMORS OF CERTAIN MINISTERS HAVING TAKEN BRIBES OR KICK-BACKS, IN GENERAL THERE APPEARS TO BE RELATIVELY LITTLE CORRUPTION. AN INFLEXIBLE MARKETING SYSTEM HAS LED TO THE CREATION OF A BLACK-MARKET IN BASIC FOOD STUFFS, BUT IN OTHER AREAS SUCH AS CUSTOMS, LICENSING, ETC., THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE GREAT ABUSE.

4. LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOREGOING HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD:

A.) EXTENT TO WHICH POSITIVE HUMAN RIGHTS MEASURES ARE ARTICULATED AS PUBLIC POLICY: ALTHOUGH THE KEREKOU GOVERNMENT IN PRINCIPLE RECOGNIZES PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS NOTED ABOVE, IT HAS FREQUENTLY VIOLATED OR ABROGATED THEM IN THE NAME OF DEFENDING THE REVOLUTION. DRAFT CONSTITUTION, HOWEVER, PUBLICLY CITES THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS: EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW, RIGHT TO ELECT AND BE ELECTED TO PUBLIC OFFICE, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND FAMILY, EQUALITY OF WOMEN; THE RIGHT TO WORK; THE RIGHT TO AN EDUCATION, FREE EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION AS NOTED ABOVE, THE RIGHT TO PRACTICE OR NOT PRACTICE A RELIGION, THE RIGHT TO THE INVIOABILITY OF THE HOME, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND PRIVACY OF COMMUNICATION, AND THE RIGHT TO A FREE CHOICE OF RESIDENCE. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN TO WHAT EXTENT THESE PUBLICLY ARTICULATED THOMPSON

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PRINCIPLES WILL BE MODIFIED AS THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION IS AMENDED OR THE
DEGREE TO WHICH PRINCIPLES OF MARXISM-LENINISM WILL GIVE THESE RIGHTS
SPECIAL INTERPRETATIONS.

B.) EXTENT TO WHICH VIOLATIONS CONDONED AS PUBLIC POLICY
BECAUSE OF SECURITY OR OTHER JUSTIFICATIONS: AS NOTED EARLIER, THE
NEED TO PROTECT THE REVOLUTION, TO TRANSFORM A TRADITIONAL SOCIETY IN
TO
A MARXIST ONE AND VARIOUS ATTEMPTED COUPS D' ETAT HAVE GIVEN THE GOVERN-
MENT EXCUSES FOR CURTAILING HUMAN RIGHTS. STATE OF EMERGENCY IMPOSED
AFTER JANUARY 16 ATTACK CONTINUES IN EFFECT AND WHILE ARBITRARY MEASURES
HAVE GREATLY DECREASED IN FREQUENCY, GPRB AT ANY TIME COULD REIMPOSE
THEM.

5. WILLINGNESS AND PAST RECORD OF GOVERNMENT REGARDING
INDEPENDENT, OUTSIDE INVESTIGATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS: GPRB
HAS NEVER BEEN FACED WITH A FORMAL DEMAND FOR INVESTIGATION OF ITS HUMAN
RIGHTS PRACTICES. THE CLOSEST EQUIVALENT WAS THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED
BY A UN FACT-FINDING MISSION AT THE INVITATION OF THE GPRB IN CONNECTION
WITH THE JANUARY 16 MERCENARY ATTACK. THAT GROUP, HOWEVER, DID NOT
ADDRESS ITSELF SPECIFICALLY TO TREATMENT OF PRISONERS. IF PUBLICLY
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ACCUSED OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY THE UNITED STATES, THE GPRB
WOULD PROBABLY CONSIDER IT AN ATTEMPT TO INTERFERE IN THE PROGRESS OF
THE REVOLUTION. IN 1975 AND 1976, AMESTY INTERNATIONAL CRITICIZED
GPRB TREATMENT OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND ASKED FOR A COMMUTATION OF
EIGHT DEATH SENTENCES PRONOUNCED UPON COUP LOTTERS, MANY OF WHOM WERE
CONDEMNED IN ABSENTIA. WHILE THE KEREKOU GOVERNMENT DID NOT RESPOND
TO

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S APPEAL, IT HAS NEVER CARRIED OUT ANY OF THE EXECUTIONS; AND CURRENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT IT DOES NOT INTEND TO DO SO.

B. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. SIGNIFICANT OBJECTIVES OVER NEXT THREE TO 12 MONTHS IN RELATION TO IMPROVING CONDITIONS WITH RESPECT TO CATEGORIES A (1), 2, AND 3 ABOVE.

(10 RESPECT FOR INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON.

OBJECTIVE: ENCOURAGE GPRB TO ADHERE TO BASIC PRINCIPLES IT HAS ENUNCIATED IN DRAFT CONSTITUTION AND SEE THAT THESE RIGHTS, SPECIFICALLY WITH REGARD TO THE LIBERTY OF THE INDIVIDUAL, ARE RESPECTED.

IMPORTANCE: REPRESENTS BASIC ELEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS AND MAJOR BASIS FOR CRITICIZING GPRB.

FEASIBILITY: DEPENDS ON DEGREE TO WHICH PROVISIONS OF DRAFT CONSTITUTION ARE IMPLEMENTED AND OBSERVED. IF THERE ARE FURTHER ATTEMPTED

COUPS D'ETAT OR SIMILAR GROUNDS FOR MAINTAINING SECURITY MEASURES, HUMAN RIGHTS WILL TAKE SECONDARY ROLE TO NATIONAL EMERGENCY.

U.S. LEVERAGE: VERY LIMITED. WE HAVE A NEGLIGIBLE ECONOMIC AND MARGINAL POLITICAL INTERESTS IN BENIN. OUR PRIMARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS ARE RELATED TO AGREEMENTS REACHED PRIOR TO REGIME'S DECISION
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TO PURSUE MARXIST OPTION. POST-JANUARY 1977 STATE OF EMERGENCY HAS AT TIMES HAMPERED OPERATIONS AND PLACED THE STATUS OF THE PEACE CORPS IN QUESTION. FOLLOWING A FOOD SHORTAGE, EXACERBATED BY POOR PRICING POLICIES GOVERNED BY IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS, GOVERNMENT ASKED US FIRST FOR A PL 480 TITLE II 206 PROGRAM, AND WHEN TOLD THAT IT WAS NOT PRACTICABLE NOW IS SEEKING A STRAIGHT PL-480 TITLE II DONATION PROGRAM. (IN THE INTERIM THERE HAD BEEN REPORTED CASES OF DEATHS FROM STARVATION IN WESTERN BENIN).

LIKELY INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT: ALTHOUGH BENIN'S PRINCIPAL POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL TIES ARE WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, IT STILL RECEIVES CONSIDERABLE ASSISTANCE FROM FRANCE, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (EEC), THE ENTENTE FUND, GERMANY, CANADA, AND THE UNITED STATES. FRANCE APPEARS TO BE WILLING TO SUFFER A GREAT DEAL RATHER THAN MAKE ANY DRASTIC CHANGES IN ITS RELATIONSHIP. FRENCH CITIZENS HAVE BEEN HELD WITHOUT BEING CHARGED FOR PERIODS OF TIME WHICH HAD THEY BEEN DETAINED US OR GERMAN NATIONALS, WOULD HAVE CREATED MAJOR INTERNATIONAL INCIDENTS. GERMANY AND CANADA WOULD PROBABLY GIVE US SOME MORAL SUPPORT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, BUT EACH FOR ITS OWN REASONS IS COMMITTED TO HELPING BENIN; GERMANY ON ACCOUNT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF ITS SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT; CANADA, BECAUSE OF

ITS COMMITMENT TO EXPAND TIES WITH FRANCOPHONE AFRICA.

OPTIONS: (A) CUT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. WITH THE PEACE CORPS PRESENCE ON THE WANE, THE PARAKOU-MALANVILLE ROAD COMPLETED, AND THE \$11 MILLION COTONOU BRIDGE UNDER CONSTRUCTION, THERE IS LITTLE TO CUT. WE HAVE ALREADY PRETTY WELL EXHAUSTED THE BRIDGE AS A SOURCE OF LEVERAGE BY USING IT AS A BARGAINING CHIP IN NORMALIZING RELATIONS, IN 1976.

(B) INCREASE US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE:
US ASSISTANCE COULD BE INCREASED IN AREAS SUCH AS HEALTH, RURAL DEVELOPMENT. WHILE THIS WILL HELP THE COUNTRY'S POOREST INDIVIDUALS, IT WILL NOT MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE TO GOVERNMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. CONVERSELY, DENYING BENIN THIS FORM OF ASSISTANCE WOULD PROBABLY MAKE THE SITUATION WORSE, SINCE THE SUFFERERS WOULD BE THE RURAL POOR.

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DUALS, IT WILL NOT MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE TO GOVERNMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. CONVERSELY, DENYING BENIN THIS FORM OF ASSISTANCE WOULD PROBABLY MAKE THE SITUATION WORSE, SINCE THE SUFFERERS WOULD BE THE RURAL POOR.
A DILEMA INDEED.

(C) WE PROVIDE NO SECURITY ASSISTANCE AND REGIME UNLIKELY TO BE INTERESTED.

(D) EXIM BANK CREDITS: INTERNAL MANAGEMENT OF ECONOMY IS NOT CONDUCTIVE TO EXIM BANK CREDITS.

(E) QUIET DIPLOMACY: PROBABLY THE BEST APPROACH IF WE HAVE SPECIFIC WRONGS WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE BENINESE REDRESS.

(F) IFI LOANS: WE HAVE ALREADY INDICATED TO BENINESE AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON THAT OUR VOTE ON IDA LOAN PROPOSALS FOR BENIN WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT BENIN'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD AND INFORMED GPRB OF OUR ABSTENTION ON WORLD BANK LOANS TO BENIN. WE SHOULD BE CERTAIN THAT WE CAN CITE SPECIFIC VIOLATIONS WHEN REFERRING TO BENIN'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD.

(2) RESPECT FOR POLITICAL AND CIVIL LIBERTIES:

OBJECTIVE: ENCOURAGE REGIME TO ADHERE TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, THOUGHT, ASSEMBLY, AND MOVEMENT PROVISIONS, ETC., SET FORTH IN DRAFT CONSTITUTION.

IMPORTANCE: SECONDARY IN RELATION TO OBJECTIVES FOR (1) ABOVE. FEASIBILITY, LEVERAGE AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT ESSENTIALLY
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THE SAME FOR (1) ABOVE.

(3) RECENT TRENDS IN GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES RELATING TO THE FUL-FILLMENT OF BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE, AND EDUCATION
:

OBJECTIVE: ENCOURAGE REGIME TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVELY ITS ANNOUNCED GOALS.

IMPORTANCE: SHOULD PRODUCE BETTER OVERALL HUMAN RIGHTS CLIMATE BUT GIVEN REGIME'S IDEOLOGICAL RIGIDITY, ROLE OF THIS ASPECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS NOT CLEAR.
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FEASIBILITY: REGIME IS INTERESTED IN ASSISTANCE BUT PRIMARILY ON ITS OWN IDEOLOGICAL TERMS WHICH TENDS TO LIMIT VALUE AND EXTENT OF ASSISTANCE. REGIME PROBABLY NOT OPEN TO ADVICE ON MORE PRACTICAL ECONOMIC POLICIES.

U.S. LEVERAGE: ESSENTIALLY AS IN (1) ABOVE.

LIKELY INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT: ESSENTIALLY SAME AS IN (1) ABOVE. IFI'S PROVIDE SUPPORT BUT NOT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS REASONS.

OPTIONS: LIMITED TO B OF (1) ABOVE.

RECOMMENDATIONS: WE HAVE ALREADY BEGUN QUIET DIPLOMACY AND IFI APPROACH FOR OBJECTIVES (1) AND (2). DEPENDING ON GPRB REACTION AND DEVELOPING HUMAN RIGHTS PICTURE IN BENIN OTHER OPTIONS CAN BE CON

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SIDERED. FOR ALL THREE OBJECTIVES WE SHOULD PROBABLY CONTINUE PRESEN
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LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE TO BENIN. BUT IF THERE IS NO CHANGE OR SITUATION
DETERIORATES WE SHOULD REVIEW ASSISTANCE TO BENIN. IT APPEARS UNLIKE
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THAT DIRECT OFFER OF ASSISTANCE INCREASE, OR ADVICE ON PRACTICAL ECON
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MEASURES WOULD AFFECT REGIME'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES. IF PL-480
TITLE II REQUEST IS ADEQUATELY JUSTIFIED AND MEETS PROGRAM REQUIREMEN
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WE SHOULD CONSIDER IT FAVORABLY.
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(2). PRINCIPAL REACTIONS IN HOST COUNTRIES TO NEW U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS
POLICIES AND EMBASSY ACTIONS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THOSE
POLICIES: GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN HAS HAD LITTLE TO
SAY ABOUT US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES BUT GENERALLY VIEWS INDIVIDUAL
RIGHTS IN A MULTI-PARTY AS OPPOSED TO A UNITARY PARTY CONTEXT AS
A WESTERN/CAPITALIST CONCEPT. IN MID-MAY WE
MADE INITIAL HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH IN DISCUSSION BETWEEN
ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS AND BENINESE
AMBASSADOR IN WHICH WE ALSO COMPLAINED ABOUT DETENTION OF US CITIZEN
AND APPLICATION OF BENINESE INTERNAL SECURITY RESTRICTIONS TO
DIPLOMATS. APPROACH GENERALLY NOTED OUR CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
AND EMPHASIZED THAT WE WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT BENIN'S HUMAN RIGHTS
RECORD IN VOTING ON IDA PROPOSED LOANS FOR BENIN. WE SUBSEQUENTLY
ABSTAINED IN A VOTE ON TWO IDA LOANS FOR BENIN (DOLS 7.5 MILLION).
REACTION OF BENINESE AMBASSADOR WAS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN INCOMPREHENSION
AND
GUILE. HE STATED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS VERY CONCERNED WITH HUMAN
RIGHTS AND THAT THE ONLY PEOPLE NOT FREE IN BENIN WERE THOSE WHO WERE
OPPOSED TO GOVERNMENT POLICY. HE ALSO ASSOCIATED HUMAN RIGHTS REMARK
S
WITH OUR PROTEST OVER DETENTION OF US CITIZEN. THE GPRB IN COTONOU
RESPONDED TO OUR ABSTENTION ACTION BY QUESTIONING OUR CHARGES OF
VIOLATIONS AND JUSTIFYING PRESENT MEASURES ON SECURITY GROUNDS. THE
ALSO INFORMED US THAT NEW CONSTITUTION WAS BEING DRAFTED. EMBASSY
BELIEVES THERE ARE SOME SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIO
N.
WE HAVE NO REACTION FROM NON-GOVERNMENTAL GROUPS IN BENIN REGARDING
OUR NEW HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES BUT ARE AWARE THAT A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER
OF PEOPLE IN BENIN ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE REGIME'S POLICIES.

(3) IMPLICATIONS OF REACTIONS IN (2) ABOVE FOR POSITIVE AND NEGA-
TIVE CHANGES IN HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS: PROSPECTS FOR SIGNIFICANT
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IMPROVEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS IN BENIN ARE
UNCERTAIN. SINCE THE REGIME IS RELATIVELY YOUNG,
AND HAS SELDOM OPERATED IN "NORMAL" CIRCUMSTANCES (WITHOUT FACING
A COUP D' ETAT OR SIMILAR EMERGENCY) THERE IS ALWAYS A SLIGHT HOPE TH
AT
CONDITIONS MAY IMPROVE.

(4) A) IMPACT OF PROPOSED ACTIONS ON US INTEREST. THE US HAS
LIMITED INTEREST IN BENIN. WE HAVE HAD NO AMBASSADOR THERE SINCE
FEBRUARY 1976 WHEN OUR AMBASSADOR WAS RECALLED FOLLOWING DISCOURTEOUS
TREATMENT AT THE HANDS OF BENINISE OFFICIALS. BENIN IS OF LITTLE
INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE. ACTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IF TAKEN CAUTIOUSL
Y
MIGHT SLIGHTLY IMPROVE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT BUT A MOR
E
LIKELY RESULT IS A NEGATIVE RESPONSE. A STRONG APPROACH WOULD
PROBABLY DISRUPT OUR ALREADY LIMITED PRESENCE AND MIGHT LEAD GOVERNME
NT
TO INSTITUTE MORE REPRESSIVE MEASURES AGAINST THOSE SEEN AS HAVING
COOPERATED WITH US.

B) LIKELIHOOD OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORTING US EFFORTS TO PROMOTE
HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:
NOT ANSWERABLE AT THIS TIME.
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